

COVID 19 Guidance for Pharmacies and Pharmacists

Arkansas Pharmacists Association and Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy

In light of on-going COVID-19 concerns and Governor Hutchinson's recent State of Emergency Declaration, the Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy and the Arkansas Pharmacists Association recommend **voluntary suspension of all non-emergency or non-urgent care or services to patients through April 3, 2020, or longer depending on the severity of the pandemic in Arkansas.** This recommendation is subject to change as this public health threat evolves.

Recognizing this guidance and the fact that pharmacies and pharmacists are critical to the well-being of our citizens not only dealing with COVID 19 but also the ongoing care of Arkansans, the Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy and the Arkansas Pharmacists Association suggest the following:

Recommended guidelines suggest limiting contact with any high-risk patients who meet any of the following criteria:

- Recently returned from overseas travel;
- present with a fever of 100.4°F;
- aged 65 and older;
- have compromised immune systems and/or present with chronic disease (ASA 2 and above)

Universal precautions are to be strictly followed in order to minimize the possibility of disease transmission. Here are several suggestions:

- Make sure your workplace, counter tops, work areas, keyboards, credit card readers, door handles, etc. are being sanitized/disinfected frequently.
- Instruct your patients and staff to practice social distancing when dealing with patients. Suggestions have included keeping a counter between yourself and patients and avoiding unnecessary contact with patients (shaking hands, fist bumps, hugs...) We have also seen pharmacies that put tape on their floors or signs to indicate how far apart people should stand in line from each other.
- Explore the ability to serve patients via drive thru, curbside pick-up or delivery rather than in the pharmacy itself.
- If your pharmacy is allowing the public to enter, the pharmacy should consider limiting the number of people that can be in the pharmacy and should also encourage social distancing of customers in the pharmacy.

Patients with an acute respiratory illness or that are potentially contagious with COVID 19 may present for treatment. It may not be possible to know the cause of any patient's illness, so it is important to follow this guidance and standard precautions at all times to best protect your staff from exposure.

- Patients with an acute respiratory illness should not be in the pharmacy.
- Seek to prevent the transmission of respiratory infections in healthcare settings by adhering to respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette.
- Provide tissues and no-touch receptacles for used tissue disposal if needed.
- Personnel assessing a patient with influenza-like or other respiratory illness should wear disposable surgical facemask*, non-sterile gloves, gown, and eye protection (e.g., goggles) to prevent exposure.
- Patient and workers should perform hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic hand wash) after possible contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.
- Routine cleaning and disinfection strategies used during influenza seasons can be applied to the environmental management for COVID-19. More information can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/gl_environinfection.html

Collective actions taken by the community can help deter the proliferation of the COVID-19 virus in Arkansas. By rescheduling elective procedures, professionals can do our part to prevent community spread, as well as help to preserve the limited supply of personal protective equipment that is critical for frontline healthcare personnel responding to this pandemic.

For the most up-to-date information and support, visit our website:

www.healthy.arkansas.gov

For the most up-to-date information and guidance on COVID-19 in Arkansas, visit:

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>

For the most up-to-date information and guidance on COVID-19 from the Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy, visit:

<https://pharmacyboard.arkansas.gov/covid>

For the most up-to-date information and guidance on COVID-19 from the Arkansas Pharmacists Association, visit:

www.arrx.org/covid

Arkansas Department of Health has activated a call center to answer questions from health care providers and the public about the novel coronavirus. During normal business hours (8:00am – 4:30pm), urgent and non-urgent calls, please call 1-800-803-7847 or email ADH.CoronaVirus@arkansas.gov. After normal business hours and weekend calls, needing immediate response, please call 1-800-554-5738.